



Safe Routes
to School
National
Partnership

Creating Healthier Communities Through Shared Use of Hospitals

Communities across the country are addressing chronic disease through a variety of innovative healthy eating and active living strategies. The practice of shared use – opening up a public or private facility for community uses beyond its primary purpose – increases communities' access to physical activity opportunities and nutritious foods. Traditionally a school-based strategy, shared use practices have been expanded and applied to other settings such as faith-based institutions, libraries and other municipal buildings. Now hospitals can play a role in implementing this strategy to address the community's physical activity and nutrition needs.



“Shared use” or “joint use” increases the opportunity for communities to be physically active and have access to healthy food. Whether it's a group of seniors participating in a walking club, adult fitness classes, or community gardens, shared use offers opportunities for individuals to engage in the recommended minutes of physical activity and increases access to nutritious foods. Many communities face barriers to physical activity and healthy food, such as unsafe or insufficient open space, costly gym memberships, or too few grocery stores. When we work together we can address these barriers by making the most of existing resources such as schools, faith-based institutions, hospitals and community clinics. These various settings offer numerous opportunities to increase access to space for physical activity. Hospitals play an important role in helping people stay healthy, not only through the traditional advice from doctors, but also in creating healthier communities. As major employers and health leaders, hospitals can play a critical role in helping to establish strong community norms for promoting healthy and active living through nutritious foods and opportunities for physical activity.

What's the Problem?

In 2010, 35.8 percent of Ohioans were overweight,¹ and another 29 percent were obese, for a total of 65 percent of Ohioans having unhealthy weights. Obesity is an epidemic affecting people across the country, causing high levels of preventable disease, including heart disease, hypertension, and Type 2 diabetes. With such high numbers, it is clear that this is not just an individual problem – the community as a whole has to invest in the solution. Many low-income communities, communities of color and rural communities don't have access to safe places to be physically active or obtain nutritious foods. Through innovative partnerships we can address many of these issues. Shared use ensures that all residents in every community are able to live a healthier life by getting the recommended minutes of physical activity and eating plenty of fruits and vegetables.

What is Shared Use?

Shared use occurs when a facility or other space is opened up to the public or a group that wouldn't otherwise be able to use it. Shared use works as a way to address the many barriers that contribute to physical

inactivity, by creating opportunities for people to be physically active and access healthy food through existing community amenities such as schools, faith based institutions, hospitals or community clinics.

Shared use or joint use occurs when government entities (or sometimes nonprofit organizations) agree to open or broaden access to their property and/or facilities for community use.² The partnerships can be formal (based on a written document) or informal (based on historical practice or a verbal agreement). Formal arrangements are often documented through a legal agreement, which sets forth the terms and conditions for the shared use of the property or facility. Successful partnerships generally rely on the pooling of resources to expand community access and use public space more efficiently.



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Hospitals and Shared Use

Hospitals can play a role in addressing physical inactivity by opening their facilities to the community through shared use policies and agreements. Non-profit hospitals may be able to help satisfy their community benefit requirement by allowing the community access to hospital resources, such as walking paths or indoor walking spaces, multi-purpose rooms for fitness classes or health education classes, fitness centers, healing gardens, and space for community gardens or farmers markets.

Understanding Hospital Community Benefits

Hospital community benefits are initiatives and activities undertaken by non-profit hospitals to improve health in the communities they serve.³ Community benefits advance a non-profit hospital's commitment to its charitable mission, and they also provide a justification for its tax exemption. Non-profit hospitals have been recognized by the Internal Revenue Service as charitable organizations that qualified for tax exemption because of their provision of charity of care to those that are unable to pay. Although charity care remains an important element of community benefit, recent changes and clarifications regarding what satisfies the community benefit standard have established that hospitals' charitable tax exemption may be supported by other activities designed to improve the health of the community as a whole, such as shared use. Shared use practices can also assist nonprofit hospitals in meeting other requirements established by the Affordable Care Act, such as the requirement to conduct a community health needs assessment at least every three years and develop an implementation strategy to address the needs identified by the assessment.

Recommendations for Hospitals to Participate in Creating Healthy Communities

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention states that hospitals should consider the following in creating healthier communities.⁴ Key considerations should include:

- Build a healthy environment to create a culture of health in the hospital.
- Review current hospital policies to determine if they support the use of the built environment, such as allowing use of grassy areas for physical activity.
- Connect the built environment with health outcomes so all stakeholders understand the importance of active environments.
- Partner with community organizations (i.e. parks and recreations, community based organizations, etc.) to assist in providing physical activity programming at facilities for the community to utilize.
- Implement ideas such as Walk with the Doc/Bike with the Doc programming that uses adjacent walking paths or green spaces near the hospital property for increased physical activity opportunities.

References

- 1 Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Ohio State Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity Profile (2010) <http://www.cdc.gov/obesity/stateprograms/fundedstates/pdf/ohio-state-profile.pdf> Retrieved April 15, 2014.
- 2 Collaborative Definition by Safe Routes to School National Partnership, ChangeLab Solutions, Prevention Institute and University of Berkeley Center for Cities and Schools.
- 3 The Hilltop Institute *What are hospital community benefits?* Hospital Community Benefit Program <http://www.hilltopinstitute.org/publications/WhatAreHCBsTwoPager-February2013.pdf> Retrieved March 20, 2014.
- 4 Center for Disease Control and Prevention *Improving Hospital Physical Activity Environments* http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpao/hwi/downloads/p2p/P2P_PA_Issue5.pdf Retrieved March 20, 2014

Case Study: Columbus, Ohio

In Central Ohio, Mount Carmel's Community Health Resource Center utilizes a shared use agreement to bring together a variety of health, educational and support resources to the local community, patients and their families, and Mount Carmel staff and physicians. The center features a state-of-the-art Consumer Health Library, a demonstration kitchen and an open space to allow for physical activity and meetings.

The goal of the Community Health Resource Center is to provide education, health and wellness services to the entire community, with a special focus on Franklinton and the communities around Mount Carmel West, a low-income area of Columbus, Ohio. In moving healthcare information and education beyond the traditional hospital setting, the goal is to better prevent and manage chronic medical conditions, encourage healthy lifestyle habits and promote holistic wellness, resulting in a healthier community.

In addition to Mount Carmel's contributions, many of the education and support services are offered through community partnerships.

Resource Center programs include:

- Tai Chi
- Cooking Classes and Nutrition Education
- Financial Education Classes
- Moms2B
- Cancer Services
- Breast Feeding Support Group
- Consumer Health Library
- Diabetes Support Group